

**Minutes of the Special Meeting
of the Salem School Committee
Monday, December 22, 2025
Rm. 227, 29 Highland Ave.
Hybrid Meeting**

Members Present: Mayor Pangallo, Vice Chair Cruz, Amanda Campbell, Beth Anne Cornell, AJ Hoffman and Veronica Miranda

Others in Attendance: Superintendent Stephen Zrike, Deputy Superintendent Carbone and Assistant Superintendent Pauley

Members Absent: Mary Manning

Call of Meeting to Order

Mayor Pangallo called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes of Regular School Committee Meeting held on December 15, 2025

Member Cornell made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting held on December 15, 2025. Member Campbell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Recognition of School Committee Members Manny Cruz and Amanda Campbell

Mayor Pangallo expressed words of appreciation for Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell. Mayor Pangallo continued that they both served during the pandemic which was a challenging time. Mayor Pangallo hoped that they would continue to be engaged with the district.

Member Cornell commented on all the achievements and endeavors of Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell since they first started serving on the School Committee in 2018. Member Miranda expressed appreciation to Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell for their support. Superintendent Zrike commented that Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell have deep expertise on K-12 education and cared about student voice as well as advocacy.

Mayor Pangallo acknowledged Senator Joan Lovely as well as former School Committee members, Ana Nuncio and Dr. Kristin Pangallo who were in the audience. Mayor Pangallo said Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll who also previously served on the School Committee with Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell was not able to attend but sent her regards and appreciation for their service. Mayor Pangallo read the citations provided to Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell from the City of Salem. Senator Lovely thanked everyone who has ever served on a School Committee as well as the two honorees, Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell. Senator Lovely read the citations for Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Senate. Tokens of appreciation were also presented to Vice Chair Cruz and Member Campbell.

Member Campbell related how and why she became a School Committee member. Member Campbell said that it has been a privilege to serve on the School Committee alongside all the other members. Member Campbell noted the difference between believing in equity and enacting it, as one requires only words whereas the other requires sustained actions, discomfort and accountability. Enacting equity means moving beyond intention and into practice, questioning whose voices are being centered, whose experiences are being prioritized and who is bearing the consequences of decisions. Equity must be demonstrated consistently through the choices made and having ongoing conversations with the community. Member Campbell hoped that the School Committee holds itself to the standard of deep listening, meaningful partnership with the communities most impacted by every decision, recognizing that the strongest outcomes are built with communities and not merely for them.

Vice Chair Cruz thanked everyone for their kind words as well as their dedication to the students, educators and families of the Salem Public Schools. Vice Chair Cruz related his personal experience studying at the Salem Public Schools as well as running for office and thanked all the educators, community members and family who supported him in his personal growth. Vice Chair Cruz hoped that the School Committee will continue to be reflective and build bridges of understanding between each other, families, educators and students. Vice Chair Cruz said that in order to encourage more families who speak different languages to attend meetings and engage in the process, space needs to be created for them where they feel safe and comfortable. Vice Chair Cruz added that it is not enough just to recruit diverse educators but there is a need to retain them; and that in order for the School Committee to reflect the diverse experiences of students and educators, members of the School Committee from those backgrounds need to be supported and given opportunities for leadership. Vice Chair Cruz said that he would continue to help and support the district.

Graduation Requirements and Competency Determination Policy

Superintendent Zrike said that the Competency Determination (CD) which is based on the guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) replaces the requirement for students to pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in order to receive a high school diploma.

Deputy Superintendent Carbone said the draft policy was presented to the Curriculum Subcommittee. Deputy Superintendent Carbone continued that there is some overlap between the local graduation requirements and the Competency Determination but that the graduation requirements cannot replace the CD. The CD requires students to show mastery of skills in English Language Arts, Math and Science. The graduating class of 2027 need to show mastery of skills in US History as well. Students also need to show satisfactory completion of the coursework. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said the policy outlines the components of the CD, grading scales based on the high school the student attends, final exam, practices supporting students with disabilities and students who enroll after 9th grade as well as the appeals process. Deputy Superintendent Carbone added that School Committee approval is needed for this policy so that it can be submitted to DESE by December 31, 2025.

Superintendent Zrike commented that the district may receive feedback from DESE.

Member Campbell said that the Curriculum Subcommittee unanimously recommended to move forward with the CD and refer it to the Policy Subcommittee. Member Cornell said that the Policy Subcommittee did not make any additional comments.

In response to Mayor Pangallo, Superintendent Zrike and Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that this is similar to what other districts are doing.

Member Campbell made a motion to approve and adopt the graduation requirements and competency determination policy, and suspend the rules for three readings of the policy. Member Cornell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

2026-2027 Program of Studies for Salem High School, New Liberty Innovation School and Salem Prep High School

Superintendent Zrike said that this is the first time that all three high schools have submitted their Programs of Studies for review. Deputy Superintendent Carbone added that at the recent Curriculum Subcommittee meeting, the principals of the three high schools presented slides outlining recommended changes to the programs of studies. Deputy Superintendent Carbone said that this is the first year that the Salem Prep High School has a program of Studies and the second year for the New Liberty Innovation School. There were not any substantive changes.

Member Campbell said that the Curriculum Subcommittee unanimously approved the programs of studies to be brought forward to the School Committee. Member Campbell added that it is equity in action to show students and families the consistency across all three high schools.

Member Campbell made a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Program of Studies for Salem High School, New Liberty Innovation School and Salem Prep High School. Member Cornell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Cruz made a motion to adjourn at 7:46 pm. Member Campbell seconded and it was so VOTED. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shirley Dorai

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent